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SYNOD SERMON

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"And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes."—Isaiah xxxv: 7.

In the two preceding chapters of this prophecy we read of what the Lord was to do to the nations for their persecution of His Zion. Though they had great prosperity, the Lord was to take the sword of His Justice out of its sheath and to bathe it in the blood of His enemies, making their land desolate, never to be restored to its former prosperity, but to be a gathering place for the wild beasts of the field and the vultures of the air, so that, as the enemies had made Zion desolate, they also were to be made desolate. It was to be the time of the Lord's vengeance upon Zion's enemies, and also the time for building up Zion. This has taken place, in a measure, on many an occasion and in different parts of the world, in the history of the Church of Christ. But we think it appears from the words of our text that the Holy Spirit has His eye on a time in the history of the Church when the spiritual prosperity of Zion shall appear in a manner, and in a measure, in which it has not yet appeared. Truly the Church of Christ is in a low condition in our day. Satan and the world have combined to destroy it and the ungodly have set up their ensigns as tokens of their victory, and it can truly be said that "the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (Isaiah i: 8). Her condition is well known to her God, and she is to Him as the apple of His eye. Therefore, in her low condition, she may use the language of faith and say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah vii: 8).

From the words of our text I shall endeavour, as enabled, to notice—I, The condition brought before us. II, The change which is to be brought about. III, The Power which will effect the change.

I. The condition brought before us. It is represented as the "habitation of dragons." While the word "dragon" is used in various ways in Scripture it may be looked upon as a symbol of desolation, and seems to be so used in our text. The condition indicated would lead one to understand that the habitation of dragons was a place of spiritual barrenness where nothing beneficial to the soul was to be found. Nothing can change that condition but an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Such places are to be found all over the world today. In the Book of Revelation we find Satan referred to as "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan" (Rev. xx: 2), and wherever he has his seat that must be the "habitation of dragons." Taking a look at the world today, these dragons are numerous, and are like the hydra-headed monsters of mythology, when their heads are cut off, numbers of other heads grow up in their place.

The Church of Rome, which Calvin called the "masterpiece of the Devil," is a habitation of dragons. Its religion is a religion of fear, and its followers are strangers to the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. It claims to be the Church out of which there is no salvation, and all who are outside its pale are damned. Its clergy are bound by a solemn oath to "persecute to the death" all who will not acknowledge the Pope as Christ's Vicar on earth, and they will carry out the terms of that oath wherever that is possible for them. In the past they have put many thousands of Christ's witnesses to the stake and to the gallows, while those condemned by the Inquisition in Spain and elsewhere suffered indescribable torments before death set them free from the merciless sufferings meted out to them by their tormentors. Were these torturers and their masters men? They claimed to be, but they were devils incarnate, and their works showed them to have come forth from the "habitation of dragons," whatever claims to be Christians they might make. Let us not forget that the Inquisition is still an office of the so-called holy Roman Church.

Other habitations of dragons are those places where people are kept in ignorance of that salvation which is by Christ alone, such as those parts of the world which are under the power of Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Communism, and Heathenism, for "where there is no vision the people perish." The Gentile world, before the Gospel was sent to them were "aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the

covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world " (Eph. ii: 12). Such is the condition of a large part of the world today. The name of Jesus is not known, and where men penetrate with the Gospel it is at the risk of their lives, and such as receive the Gospel, when it comes to them, are ostracised and persecuted. Such have enough evidences that these are places " where Satan's seat is," where he reigns as king by lies and murder. Even places where the Gospel has been are fast becoming the habitations of dragons by the infiltration of Popery, Mormonism, and Jehovah Witnesses. This, no doubt, is permitted by the Lord because of the neglect of the Gospel and the despising of those privileges connected with it. " He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; a fruitful land to barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein " (Psalm cvii: 33, 34).

Another dragon that rules over the greater part of the Christian world is Modernism. It has long ago become fashionable to deny the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. It began to lift its ugly head in Professors' Chairs in Germany, and men became obsessed with the idea that ministers were not fully qualified for their work unless they took a course of German theology. The result was that they began to pour out what they learned of this new theology from the pulpits of this country and America, and because this teaching was the fruit of the carnal mind which is " enmity against God " the people began to like it, and so it was fulfilled in them what is written in God's Word; " For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables " (II Timothy iv: 3, 4). It was this that ruined the once-glorious Free Church of Scotland. A flood of these Godless Modernists entered her pulpits and indoctrinated her people with their pernicious views, so that it became possible for these heretics to cause the Church to drift from its moorings, and, having thrown the Bible overboard, their fit emblem is a ship without chart or compass driven hither and thither at the mercy of the wind and the currents.

As they were determined never to take the inspired Bible as their guide again, and to take it away from the succeeding generations, they passed a Declaratory Act which purported to show what that time-honoured document, the Westminster Confession of Faith, taught and did not teach. As that Confession is based four-square on the Bible, the Declaratory Act was aimed at undermining the faith of the people in the Word of God. Had they reason to expect that they would have the blessing of God

in this? Verily no. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" (Psalm xciv: 20). Some have said that to speak of the Declaratory Act in our day is like flogging a dead horse. This is the language of ignorance or something more blameworthy. Year after year we have within reach of the voice of the pulpit or the printed page new members of the generations coming after us, and we have a commanded duty towards them as the Israelites had to their children, and to the children yet unborn, to tell them of God's testimony and law.

To the teaching of this Declaratory Act can be traced our low condition as a nation. When we take into consideration the heretical doctrines that are proclaimed as if they were gospel truths, and the height to which iniquity has risen, verily our land has become, not only a habitation of dragons, but they have their beds there. It is the place "where each lay." They are not being disturbed. As far as the preaching of a pure Gospel is concerned there is so very little of it among us that it does not reach sinners so as to disturb them. The Church has, to a large extent, eliminated the doctrine of future punishment from its creed and its preaching, and what is the result? Men have begun to reason that if all are going to Heaven, or, at least, if they are not going to be punished after death for their sins, it does not much matter how they live in this world. As a fruit of this, fallen nature appears in its worst forms and the civil authorities are not able to cope with the amount of crime which faces them. This situation is increasing every year, so that none can say where it is going to end. We remember a time, over forty years ago, when we could go through any part of Glasgow at any time of the day or night without fear of being molested, but today there are parts of Glasgow and, judging from press reports, we would not consider it wise to visit them in broad daylight. Glasgow is not an exception in this matter. All the other cities and towns in the country are in the same condition. It is well indeed that there is yet a testimony raised against the doctrines and the preaching that has such sad fruits, and that one here and there are warning sinners of their dangerous condition, but these are like the lone voice of one "crying in the wilderness."

II. I now come to notice, in the second place, something about the change which is to take place. There "shall be grass with reeds and rushes."

This indicates prosperity in place of the former desolations. In those places where the Church of Rome is dominant the invariable

rule is that the people are very poor and backward as far as matters in providence are concerned. It was so in our own land before the Reformation, and continued to be so in those places which the Reformation had not touched. We are more concerned, however, with conditions spiritually, and our text brings before us the glorious prosperity of the kingdom of Christ.

In bringing about that prosperity the Bible will be restored to the place which rightly belongs to it as the only rule which God has given to direct us as to how we may glorify and enjoy Him. Today, in the estimation of so-called scholars, the Bible is out of date and cannot be taken as a safe guide, and those who accept it as the Word of God are treated as old-fashioned and behind the times. They are neither educated nor have attained to a very high standard of intelligence. However, if there is a shred of living religion in the world today it is to be found among those who are thus despised. It was so also in the days when the Saviour tabernacled in the flesh. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. xi: 25, 26). However, in bringing about the change indicated in the text, the Lord will turn men's minds to the Bible. They will realise that no other religion will do but the religion of the Bible, and they will turn to its sacred pages under all circumstances. It was so with the people of Berea, and it is stated to their credit that "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts xvii: 11).

As a consequence of giving its proper place to the Bible, all systems of error and corruption will be overthrown. Of the Romish system it will be fulfilled, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen," and, in the memories of those who are delivered from being partakers of its plagues and in the histories that shall be written of that time, it shall be evident that it has "become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." This will also be true of every other false religion. The "assured results" of the Higher Critics and the Evolutionists, which have so often been blasted, will be finally cast into the limbo of mythology, only to be mentioned by coming generations to show the folly and the gross darkness into which men fall when they forsake the Bible.

Such a return to the Bible will change people in their walk and conversation in the world. It is when men forget God that they become notorious sinners outwardly. We read in the Book of Genesis that when the sons of God came in unto the daughters

of men that the fruit of these unblest unions was that there were giants in those days. We do not understand this to mean that they were giants in stature, but that they were giants in wickedness, for the Holy Spirit immediately writes, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually" (Genesis vi: 5). If you take a survey of the world today the same thing is true. All forms of sin are committed with greediness, but when the Lord will return in the power of the Spirit, creating a love for the Bible in the hearts of sinners, then iniquity shall hide its head for very shame. Men of renown in wickedness will become men of renown in godliness. If any one is inclined to doubt it let such a one ask himself the question: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" With the Holy Spirit accompanying the Word, a Magdalene can be found a humble penitent at the feet of the Saviour, a persecuting Saul of Tarsus is transformed into an "apostle and servant of Jesus Christ," a dark Romanist or heathen can become a bright Christian and a faithful follower of the Lamb. "The lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah xi: 7).

The strongholds of sin shall be purged. It was so in a measure at the time of the Reformation in Scotland. Many tears are shed in our day over the destruction of monasteries and nunneries which took place at that time, but the reason why they were destroyed was that the Word of God took such a hold of the consciences of men that they felt that the land could not be purged in any other way but by pulling down and setting fire to these dens of iniquity. This will take place when the words of our text shall be fulfilled. The Vatican, if not destroyed before then, shall undergo a wonderful transformation. The Lord Jesus, and not the Pope of Rome, shall be acknowledged as the Head of the Church. Monasteries and nunneries, which cannot today bear the light of public inspection, will perhaps become seats of a learning that will be a handmaid to the gospel. The gospel itself will be preached where it is not found now. Cathedrals, mosques, and other temples of idolatry will be used for another purpose than that for which they are used now. It will be a wonderful matter when the gospel shall be proclaimed, in its purity, in such places as Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral, St. Giles Cathedral, and Glasgow Cathedral, yea, when all the theatres, picture houses, and bingo halls will be filled to the doors with men and women whose souls are hungering for the Bread of Life, and where better could one go to stone the Devil than in his own houses.

Another change will be seen in men's attitude to Church Unity. At present, the World Council of Churches is putting forth every efforts to unite all the Churches in the world, and at their Conferences they have representatives from almost every Church in Christendom. The Church of Rome is intensely interested in these Conferences because the Pope sees in them the hope that those whom he used to call "Protestant heretics" but whom he now calls "separated brethren," will seek admittance to the Church of Rome. This, however, is not the unity which Christ prayed for. It is union with Rome, or rather being absorbed by the Church of Rome. The World Council of Churches does not seek unity on the basis of God's Word, and that, in itself, shows that "the habitations of dragons" are still in their midst. It is but to draw the skin of "unity" over an ugly festering sore, the corruption of which is sure to break out again and again. It is dishonouring to the Lord Jesus Christ, and detrimental to true and vital godliness, as is every other union which calls upon churches to lay down their distinctive testimony for the Bible and a full-orbed gospel. The unity that is necessary today calls upon men to stand by the Word of God, and when that unity is accomplished the Word of the Lord shall come to pass; "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent" (Zeph. iii: 9). This language will be the language of humility, godly sorrow, and love to the Lord and to all things by which He makes Himself known.

It will be the time of the ingathering of the Jews. Today, in their sad condition, scattered throughout the nations of the world, they are under the power of the dragons of unbelief and worldliness, but the Lord has promised, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born" (Zech. xii: 10). I have heard it said that when the Jews shall return to the Lord they will be the best Missionaries in the world for they are conversant with the languages of all the nations among which they are strangers. This would bring out what the Apostle Paul says, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. xi: 15). The fact that they had so long rejected Christ will kindle in them a holy zeal to advance His kingdom, and the knowledge that there is no salvation in any other, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,"

will cause them to be faithful to the souls of men. This will be true not only of the Jews but of the Gentile preachers also. The labours of such God-sent ambassadors of the Cross will be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, and will be followed by an abundant harvest.

III. This brings us in the third place to notice the power which will effect the change. It is brought before us under the similitude of water coming over the parched ground, and the thirsty land becoming springs of water. Water is used in various ways in the Scriptures. It is used for afflictions and temptations, for multitudes of people, and for unlawful pleasures. In the passage before us it is used for the gospel when it comes, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When the gospel comes with power it will alter men's attitude to the fundamental doctrines of God's Word. In many places throughout the world today where men profess to have the gospel, there is nothing said about ruin by the Fall, redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ, or the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Men deny Election, the eternal generation of God's Son, His sinless birth by the Virgin Mary, His vicarious sufferings and death, His resurrection and ascension into Heaven, together with many others of the doctrines of God's Word, thus making the places where these doctrines are denied or never proclaimed, parched ground and a thirsty land. The people perish for want of knowledge and souls are famished for want of the true Bread of Life, and the Holy Spirit is grieved away. However, we have here the fulfilment of God's promise; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses" (Isaiah xlv: 3, 4).

The idea conveyed in our text is that where there was nothing but desolation there will be an abundance of fruit, and so it shall be with the gospel when it comes with power. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Psalm lxxii: 6, 7). The history of our own land furnishes clear examples of this at the time of the First and Second Reformation. Again, who has not heard of the revivals of Kirk of Shotts, Cambuslang, Kilsyth, and various parts of the Highlands of Scotland? These were indeed days of the Son of Man on earth, and not the spurious revivals of Moody and Sankey, Chapman and Alexander, the Faith Mission, and Billy Graham. Instead of making the land

fruitful spiritually, these revivals hardened poor sinners and made them sit down contentedly in self-deception, and became worse than when they were supposed to have been converted. They appear to be like the man out of whom the unclean spirit went out, but the spirit finding no rest returns and finds the house swept and garnished. "Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. xii: 43-45).

The thirsty land shall become "springs of water." This seems to be the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the individual or in the Church. In that memorable sermon which Christ delivered on "the last day, that great day of the feast," he said, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii: 38). To this the Holy Spirit adds the explanatory statement, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." Individuals and churches shall return to the Bible, and wherever a true child of God is to be found he will be a power of good to the community, and the Church shall come up to the description given of it in the Song of Solomon, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song vi: 10). The power, the graces, and the comforts of the Spirit will be much in evidence, and people in all stations in life will be useful to the Cause of Christ. The Courts of our Church have often to protest against the conduct of those in authority in connection with their flagrant transgression of God's holy law, but then, it will be true that kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers to the Church of Christ, and all in authority will rule their subjects as they ought to be ruled—justly, "ruling in the fear of God."

In conclusion, I may point out that we have that Gospel which then shall be accompanied with such prolific fruit-bearing, but the power is withheld in our day and in our midst. Our very position, as a Church, separate from other Churches, is a testimony on behalf of that gospel. When, by embracing the Declaratory Act of 1892, others forsook the gospel, the Lord honoured us, as a Church, by taking us out of the midst of the soul-ruining heresies of that Act. We are aware that here and there throughout England and Scotland there are groups of people who are seeking to return to the old doctrines and the old paths, and who are consulting their Bibles more often than they did. We wish them every success with the blessing of the Lord, but they are only groping for what we have already, and had all along. From this we ought to see the goodness and condescension of

the Lord in raising up men, however few and weak, whom He made polished shafts in His hand to convey to us the gospel privileges which we enjoy. Let us never forget our great responsibility in that other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours. May the Lord bless His Word.

OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE

Exposition of *The Confession of Faith*, by Robert Shaw, D.D.

(Continued from page 50)

Section III.—The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

Exposition.—In this section it was manifestly the object of the compilers of our Confession to guard equally against Erastian and sectarian principles. In opposition to Erastian principles, according to which the government and discipline of the church are devolved upon the civil magistrate, they declare that the magistrate may not take upon himself either the ministerial or judicial power in the church, in opposition to Erastians, yet, to guard against the other extreme, they assert, in opposition to the sectarians of that age, that it is his duty to employ his influence and authority, in every way competent to him, for the good of the church, and the advancement of the interests of true religion.

It is somewhat remarkable that parties holding the most opposite views, in regard to the power of the civil magistrate about religion and the connection between church and state, have concurred in representing this section of our Confession as allowing to the civil magistrate a controlling power in and over the church. The defenders of the recent interferences of the civil courts in matters strictly ecclesiastical, now homologated by the state or legislature, have appealed to this section as sanctioning these interferences. The opponents of all civil establishments of religion, on the other hand, have put the same construction on this section, and have alleged that it does allow to the civil magistrate an Erastian power in and over the church. "This, if true, would be very

strange, considering that the assembly who compiled it were engaged in a dispute against this very claim with the parliament under whose protection they sat; and that, owing to their steady refusal to concede that power to the state (in which they were supported by the whole body of Presbyterians), the erection of presbyteries and synods in England was suspended.* Independently of this important fact, it would be easy to adduce numerous declarations from the Confession itself more than sufficient to repel the imputation. These declarations will come under our consideration afterwards, and at present we only remark, that the Confession must be presumed to be consistent with itself; and if some detached phrases in this section may be thought to admit of a construction unfavourable to the freedom and independence of the church, yet if these phrases are susceptible of an interpretation which harmonises with other explicit declarations respecting the independence of the church and the sole headship of Christ over it, that interpretation ought certainly to be received as their true and intended import.

Before proceeding to explain the several clauses of this section, it will be proper to offer a few general remarks. In the first place, it may be observed, that by the civil magistrate is here meant the state, or supreme civil power of the nation. In the Confession, and in theological writings in general, the civil magistrate means, not the sovereign, acting singly and exclusively, but the government of the country, or the power which is entitled to frame the national laws, and to regulate national measures. In the second place, it is unquestionable, that what the Confession here teaches respecting the duty of the civil magistrate, belongs to him as a magistrate; for it says, "He hath authority" to do what is ascribed to him. He is to discharge the duty here assigned to him, not merely by his advice and example, as a Christian placed in an exalted station, but by his official authority and influence as a magistrate. But, in the third place, it is not less evident, that our Confession here speaks of such a magistrate as is also a Christian, making a profession of the true religion. To suppose that any other than a Christian magistrate can do the things here ascribed to the magistrate, is an absurdity too gross to be imputed to the Confession. In the fourth place, our Confession here teaches that the advancement of religion, and the promotion of the interests of the church of Christ, form an important part of the official duty of Christian magistrates. Although the proper and immediate end of civil government, in subordination to God's glory, is the temporal good of men, yet

* McCrie's Appendix p.138.

the advancement of religion is an end which civil rulers, in the exercise of their civil authority, are bound to aim at; for even this direct end of their office cannot be gained without the aids of religion. And although magistracy has its foundation in natural principles, and Christianity invests civil rulers with no new powers, yet it greatly enlarges the sphere of the operation of that power which they possess, as civil rulers, from the law of nature. That law binds the subjects of God's moral government, jointly and severally, to embrace and reduce to practice whatsoever God is pleased to reveal as the rule of their faith and duty. And therefore nations and their rulers, when favoured with divine revelation, should give their public countenance to the true religion; remove everything out of their civil constitution inconsistent with it, or tending to retard its progress; support and protect its functionaries in the discharge of their duty; and provide, in every way competent to them, that its salutary influence have free course, and be diffused through all orders and departments of society. The compilers of our Confession had not imbibed the doctrine that the exercise of the magistrate's authority must be limited to the secular affairs of men, and that is no part of his duty, in his official capacity, to aim at the promotion of the true religion. "Certainly," said an eminent member of the Westminster Assembly, "there is much power and authority, which by the Word of God, and by the Confessions of Faith of the Reformed Churches, doth belong to the Christian magistrate in matters of religion."*

But while our Confession undeniably teaches that the civil magistrate is authorised to do something about religion and the church of Christ; yet it lays certain restrictions and limitations upon the exercise of his authority in regard to these matters. According to our Confession, the civil magistrate must not assume a lordly supremacy over the church; for "there is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ," chapter xxv, section 6. He must not interfere with her internal government; for "the Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate"; and "to these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed," chapter xxx, sections 1, 2. He must not, as a magistrate, sustain himself a public judge of true or false religion, so as to dictate to his subjects in matters purely religious; for "it belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience," etc., chapter xxi, section 3. In the first paragraph of the section now under consideration, there is another important limitation

* Gillespie's *Aaron's Rod*, p.181.

of the power of the civil magistrate in regard to the church. It is expressly declared that he may not take upon himself the administration of her ordinances of worship: "He may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments." Neither may he take upon himself the administration of the government and discipline of the church: "He may not assume to himself the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The keys, in the most extensive sense, include the whole ecclesiastical power, in distinction from the sword, or the civil power.† But "power of the keys," taken in its more limited sense, as it must be here, where it is distinguished from the administration of the Word and sacraments, just means the ordinary power of government, in the administration of the affairs of the church; and more particularly, the right of authoritatively and judicially determining all questions that may arise as to the admission of men to ordinances and to office in the Church of Christ, and the infliction and relaxation of church censures.†† This is not the only restriction laid upon the power of the civil magistrate in the present section. It is also plainly intimated that, in the execution of the duty here instructed to him, he must be regulated by the Word of God. He is not to act arbitrarily, but must be guided by the standard of God's Word. In regard to one important branch of the functions here assigned to him—that which concerns synods—it is expressly declared that he is to see that "what is transacted in them be according to the mind of God"—the mind of God, as revealed in his word, being thus distinctly prescribed as a rule to him, as it is to the ordinary members of synods.* This principle was admitted by the Erastians of former times; for they conceded to their opponents "that the Christian magistrate, in ordering and disposing of ecclesiastical causes and matters of religion, is tied to keep close to the rule of the Word of God; and that as he may not assume an arbitrary government of the state, so far less of the church.‡ It may be further added, that, according to our Confession, the civil magistrate is bound to act, in his official capacity, "according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth," section 2. Now, as our Confession of Faith is founded upon the Word of God, so it is embodied in our statute-book; and, therefore, when civil rulers assume a proper jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters,

† The Civil power is called the power of the sword, and the other (the ecclesiastical) the power of the keys—Second Book of Discipline, chapter i.

†† Cunningham's Remarks on the twenty-third chapter of the Confession of Faith. p.12.

* Ibid. p. 15-19.

§ Gillespie's Aaron's Rod, p. 173.

which the Confession has denied to them, their proceedings must be inconsistent at once with the Word of God and the law of the land.

Keeping these remarks in view, it will not be difficult to explain, in full consistency with the liberty and independence of the church, this section of our Confession. The civil magistrate, it is declared, "hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order," etc. This cannot mean that he is to accomplish the objects specified by all the ways in which it may be attempted; for, in the introductory clause, some of these are carefully excepted. It cannot mean that he has a rightful jurisdiction in these matters, and is entitled to judge and determine them, not only for himself, but for the regulation of the conduct of others; for this would be to usurp the keys of the kingdom of heaven. It can only imply that the matters specified are objects which he is entitled and bound to aim at, and to effect by such methods as are competent to him, without invading the jurisdiction of the church.

The Confession specifies certain means which the civil magistrate may lawfully employ for effecting the objects mentioned: "For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods." From this it cannot be inferred that ministers have not a power to meet of themselves in synods and assemblies, without being called by the civil magistrate; for in chapter xxxi it is expressly declared that they have such power "of themselves, and by virtue of their office." The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, indeed, were of opinion that, in the chapter now referred to, the Confession is not sufficiently explicit in regard to the intrinsic power of the church to call her own assemblies; and accordingly, in their act of 1647, by which the Confession was approved, they expressly declare that they understood that part of it "only of kirks not settled or constituted in point of government;" and that explanation must apply equally to the section now before us. Our Confession, then, does not assert that the magistrate may exercise this power on all occasions, and in all circumstances, or whenever there are any evils of a religious kind to correct. It is sufficient that there may be times and circumstances in which he may warrantably exercise this power. When the state of the nation as well as of the church may be convulsed, and its convulsions may be in a great degree owing to religious disorders, it is surely a high duty incumbent on him to take such a step, provided he finds it practicable and advisable. And such was the state of matters when the Westminster Assembly was convoked by the Parliament of England.

(To be continued)

THE SABBATH MADE FOR MAN

By late Bishop J. C. Ryle

The Sabbath is God's merciful appointment for *the common benefit of all mankind*. It was "made for man" (Mark ii: 27). It was given for the good of all classes, for the laity quite as much as for the clergy. It is a mighty public benefit. It is an ordinance which carries with it its own reward. It is good for man's body and mind. It is good for nations. Above all, it is good for souls.

The Sabbath is *good for man's body*. We all need a day of rest. On this point, at any rate, all medical men are agreed. Curiously and wonderfully made as the human frame is, it will not stand incessant work without regular intervals of repose. The gold-diggers of California soon found out that. Reckless and ungodly as many of them probably were, they still found out that a seventh day's rest was absolutely needful to keep themselves alive. Without it they discovered that in digging gold they were only digging their own graves.

The Sabbath is *good for man's mind*. The mind needs rest quite as much as the body. It cannot bear an uninterrupted strain on its powers. It must have its intervals to unbend and recover its force. Without them it will either prematurely wear out, or fail suddenly like a broken bow.

The Sabbath is *good for nations*. It has an enormous effect both on the character and temporal prosperity of a people. I firmly believe that a people which regularly rests one day in seven will do more work, and better work, in a year, than a people which never rests at all. Their hands will be stronger. Their minds will be clearer. Their power of attention, application, and steady perseverance will be far greater.

Last, but not least, the Sabbath is *an unmixed good for man's soul*. The soul has its wants just as much as the mind and body. It is in the midst of a hurrying, bustling world, in which its interests are constantly in danger of being jostled out of sight. To have those interests properly attended to, there must be a special day set apart. There must be a day to test and prove us, whether we are prepared for an eternal heaven. Take away a man's Sabbath, and his religion soon comes to nothing. As a general rule, there is a regular flight of steps from "no Sabbath" to "no God."

RABBI AKIBO

We have a beautiful illustration of the words "All things work together for good to them that love God" in the old story told of

a pious Jew, whose name was Rabbi Akibo. He had been persecuted by enemies of his religion and driven away from home. He was obliged to travel from place to place, so as to keep out of their way. On his journeys he used to carry with him a lamp, which he could light at night to read the Bible, which he delighted to study. In order to waken early in the morning he also carried a chicken cock, for it would crow to waken him. His conveyance was a donkey.

One day Rabbi Akibo had been travelling all day and felt pretty tired. Towards sunset he drove up to a nice-looking village hoping to find some inn, or friendly house, where he could spend the night. To his dismay none of the villagers would give him lodging and there was no inn there. There was no alternative but to drive on until he could find somewhere in the first woods he would reach to rest for the night. Finding a sheltered place under a thick tree he sat down upon the grass and said to himself "It's very hard not to have a house to shelter one from the cold night air, but God is good; it is all for the best."

He lit his lamp and thought he could have a pleasant time studying his Bible. Before he read many verses a storm arose. The wind blew out his lamp and the rain prevented him lighting it again. Poor Rabbi Akibo thought "What a pity, I can't enjoy a while reading the Bible, but God is good, and it is all for the best."

Then he covered himself up and lay down to sleep. On a branch beside him perched his chicken cock. The Rabbi's eyes weren't closed very long, when a wolf came by and pounced on the chicken cock and made a meal of it. This was a sore loss for the Rabbi, for he depended on the cock to waken him to study his Bible in the morning. Again he remembered, God is good and said to himself it was all for the best.

In a short time he was alarmed by the roar of a lion, which soon sprang on his trusty donkey and devoured it. This was a heavy blow to the weary traveller who thought of his lamp gone, his bird gone and his donkey too, and wondered what would he do. Again he said to himself "God is good; it's all for the best."

That was an almost sleepless troublesome night for the poor Rabbi Akibo. Early in the morning he rose and returned to the village to see if he could buy a horse or donkey to carry him and his belongings on his journey. One can imagine his surprise on entering the village when he could not find one person alive. It seems that during the night a band of robbers entered the village, murdered the inhabitants and robbed their houses of valuable things found there.

On recovering from the shock of the scene the pious Rabbi realised the wonderful care God had taken of him. He thanked

God and acknowledged how blind we mortals are, when we look upon those things as evil which are meant for our good. If those hard-hearted people had not driven him away from their village he would have perished with them. If the storm had not put out his lamp, its light would have drawn the robbers to his resting-place, and he would be killed. If the wild beasts had not devoured his two companions, the chicken cock and the donkey, the crowing of the cock and the braying of the donkey might have told the robbers of his presence and they might have murdered him.

No doubt but Rabbi Akibo would praise the Lord for His tender care over him that morning with a grateful heart and would say "Thou art good, and all that happens is for the best."

When Christian readers are faced with sad and trying circumstances let them seek grace to say like pious Rabbi Akibo "God is good, and all that happens is for the best, and take courage."

SELF-DECEIVERS

By Rev. John Flavel

That there are multitudes of self-deceivers among professors of religion, will appear,

1. *First*, By this, that there are everywhere to be found more *professors* than *converts*; unregenerate professors, whose religion is but the effect of education. Christianity, by the favour of an early providence, was the first comer, it bespoke them for itself; these are Christians of an human creation, rather born than new-born believers. Now all these are self-deceived, and hasting to damnation, under the efficacy of a strong delusion; "for if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," saith the apostle, Gal. vi:3. Surely our birth-privilege, without the new-birth, is nothing, yea, worse than nothing, as to our last and great account: That which stands for a great sum in our *arithmetic* it is nothing, it is but a *cypher* you see in God's. "Except a man be born again (saith the lips of truth) he cannot see the Kingdom of God," John iii:3.

Poor self-deceivers, ponder those words of Christ; you have hitherto thought your civil education, your dead and heartless duties, enough to denominate you Christians before God; but go now, and learn what that scripture means; and be assured you must experience another manner of conversion, or else it is impossible for you to escape eternal damnation.

2. *Secondly*, it is too manifest by this, that many professors are only acquainted with the externals of religion; and all their duties are no more but a compliance of the outward man with the commands of God. This is the superficial religion which deceives

and betrays multitudes into eternal misery. True religion seats itself in the inward man, and acts effectually upon the vital powers, killing sin in the heart, and purging its designs and delights from carnality and selfishness; engaging the heart for God; and setting it as a bow in its full bent for Him, in the approaches we make to Him. But how little are many professors acquainted with these things?

Alas! if this be all we have to stand upon, how dangerous a station is it? What is external conformity but an artificial imitation of that which lives only in the souls of good men? Thus was Jehu deceived; he did many acts of external obedience to God's command, "but Jehu took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart," 2 Kings x:31. And this was his overthrow.

This also was the ruin of these formalists, Ezek. xxxiii:31; they came and sat before the Lord as His people: The word was to them as a lovely song; mightily charmed with the modulation of the prophet's voice, and his lively gestures; but all the while their hearts went after their covetousness. And what abundance of such pharisaical, superficial religion is everywhere to be found?

3. *Thirdly*, It appears by this, that every trial made by sufferings upon professors blows away multitudes, like dry leaves in autumn, by a stormy wind; many fall from their own steadfastness in shaking times; prosperity multiplies vain professors, and adversity purges the church of them; "Then shall many be offended," Matth. xxiv:10.

This the scripture everywhere marks as a symptom of hypocrisy; Psalm lxxvii:8. "A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." 1 John ii:19. "But they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not of us." Matth. xiii:21. "For when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." But should one have told them in the days of their first profession, that all their zeal and labour in religion would have ended in this, it is likely that they would have replied as Hazael to the man of God, 2 Kings viii:13. "But what is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

Oh how unlike is their dark and dirty evening to their glorious and hopeful morning! These professors have more of the moon than of the sun, little light, less heat, but many changes: They deceive many, yea, they deceive themselves, but cannot deceive God.

4. *Fourthly*, It is too apparent by this, that many professors secretly indulge and shelter beloved lusts under the wings of their profession. This, like a worm at the root, will wither and kill

them at last, how fragrant soever they may seem to be for a season. Gideon had seventy sons, and one bastard; but that one bastard was the death of all his seventy sons.

Some men may have excellent gifts, and perform multitudes of duties; but one secret sin indulged and allowed, will destroy them all at last. He that is partial as to the mortification of his sins, is undoubtedly *hypocritical* in his profession. If David's evidence was good for his integrity, surely such professors will never clear themselves of hypocrisy. "I was also upright before Him, and kept myself from mine iniquity," saith he, Psalm xviii:23. This is the right eye, and right hand which every sincere Christian must pluck out, and cut off, Matth. v:29, 30.

Which is a metaphor from surgeons, whose manner it is, when the whole is in danger by any part, to cut it off; lest all perish.

Their suppressing some lust raiseth their confidence; the indulging of one raiseth the foundation of their hopes; and thus they deceive themselves.

5. *Fifthly*, This also manifests the self-deceits of many professors, that the secret duties of religion, or at least the secret intercourse of the soul with God in them, is a secret hid from the knowledge and experience of many professors.

To attend the ordinances of God in their seasons, they know; to pray in their families at the stated hours they know; but to retire from all the world into their closets, and there to pour out their hearts before the Lord, they know not.

To feel something within, paining them like an empty, hungry stomach, until they have eaten that hidden manna, that bread in secret; I mean refreshed their souls with real communion with the Lord there; this is a mystery locked up from the acquaintance of many that call themselves Christians; and yet this is made a characteristical note of a sincere Christian by Christ Himself, in Matth. vi:6.

O reader! if your heart were right with God, and you did not cheat yourself with a vain profession, you would have frequent business with God, which you would be loth that your dearest friend, or the wife of your bosom should be privy to: religion does not lay all open to the eyes of men. Observed duties maintain our credit, but secret duties maintain our life. It was the saying of an heathen about his secret correspondence with his friends, what need the world be acquainted with it? "You and I are theatre enough to each other." There are inclosed pleasures in religion which none but renewed souls do feelingly understand.

6. *Lastly*, How many more profess religion in these days, than ever made religion their business. Philosophy tells us, there is

a main business; and a by-business: the same is found in religion also.

There are those "that give themselves to the Lord," 2 Cor. viii:5, whose conversation, or trade, is in heaven, Phil. iii:18, the end or scope of whose life is Christ, Heb. xiii:7, 8 who give religion the precedence both in time and affection, Psalm v:3, Rom. xii:11, who are constant and indefatigable in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv:58.

And there are also those that take up religion rather for ostentation than for an occupation, who never mind the duties of religion, but when they have nothing else to do; and when their outward man is engaged in the duties of it, yet their heart is not in it; they hear, they pray, but their souls, their thoughts and minds are abroad. It is not their business to have fellowship with God in duties, to get their lusts mortified, their hearts tried, their souls conformed to the image of God in holiness.

They pray as if they prayed not, and hear as if they heard not; and if they feel no power in ordinances, no quickening in duties, it is no disappointment at all to them; for these were not their designs in drawing nigh to God in these appointments.

And thus you see what numbers of professors deceive themselves.

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE

Illustrated by an Incident of long ago in Glasgow

Farquhar Mackay was born in the north of Scotland, and at an early period was deprived of both his parents. When his sixteenth summer closed, he was apprenticed to a saddler at some distance from his birthplace, and left his relatives with other feelings than those of regret. Beyond the reach of his aunt's solemn entreaties, and the gentle reproofs of a sister, who by this time had embraced the Saviour, he now desecrated the Sabbath, contracted intemperate habits, and wrought all manner of evil with greediness. During his stay from home a solemn providence befel him, and one well fitted, if improved, to give his thoughts a new direction. One fine Sabbath morning, he and four other young lads resolved on a sailing excursion. Having departed in all safety, they spent the greater part of the day over their cups in a house of refreshment. Two hours before sunset they were on their way back, when a sudden tempest arose, and their frail bark, under management far from good upset. Ere succour came, his four companions had disappeared, and he alone was rescued from a watery grave. Impending death in his own case, actual death in the case of his companions, made but a momentary impression — his fears fled with the tempest that gave them birth;

and for all this "he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart." At length, impatient of restraint, and smarting under the rebukes of a master whose confidence he had lost, he abandoned his trade, and proceeded to Glasgow. Here he remained for some time in the most destitute condition. Every spare article of clothing was sold to meet the cravings of hunger, and often, in the depth of his distress, was he tempted to cast himself into the river. Friendless and penniless, this poor prodigal wandered the streets from morn to eve, courting the meanest drudgery to keep soul and body together, and cursing the day of his birth. After a time, burglars became his companions. He took their oath, learned their tactics, and in robbery soon equalled the most daring among them. Two years had been spent in this dangerous and disgraceful course, when a circumstance occurred which made his slumbering conscience ill at ease, and led him to alter his plans. He and his companions, after surveying the ground in the guise of pedlars, had arranged to enter and plunder the house of a widow lady resident in the suburbs. Midnight found this ruffian band silently surrounding the house, and endeavouring, for some time to no purpose, to effect an entrance. By dint of ingenuity and labour, a back window was thrown open, and in they rushed to steal, and may hap to destroy. It fell to our youth's lot to enter the lady's bed-chamber. Startled by the lantern-glare and the sound of footsteps, the sleeping invalid awoke, and screamed aloud for aid. Presently a murderous weapon was raised, a horrid threat uttered, and the keys demanded by the robber. These were at once given up. The owner saw her desk opened, and a considerable sum of money extracted. The keys were coolly returned, and the masked thief was preparing to withdraw, when the terror-stricken witness of the theft, summoning up all her courage, and heedless of consequences, exclaimed, "Knowest thou that for all this God will bring thee into judgment!" He smiled, and hurried away. Arrived at his den in the city he speedily found he had brought with him something else than spoil. An accusing conscience sat enthroned within, marshalling all its terrors, and giving birth to

"Pangs that rack the anxious mind."

"Judgment" (the widow's closing word) rose up before the eye of his mind, and covered him with confusion. This "fire shut up in his bones" — this scorching thought, he strove earnestly to get rid of, but still it glowed. For two whole weeks it was unquenchable. Wretched man! What would he not have given for some spiritual drug; for a cup of Lethe's waters — for a balm-application to his open wounds! Oh! to erase "Judgment" from the tablet of memory. In the midst of such mental torture as this,

he addressed to the widow a penitential letter, enclosing the money he had taken from her desk; and then, having abandoned for ever his burglar associates, set sail for America. At the end of his days he was an honoured and respected man, and left behind him many tokens of his good-doing.

GLEIDHEADH A CHRIDHE

Leis an Urr. Iain Flavel

(Air a leantuinn bho t.d. 58)

Ma thà 'ur suidheachadh dona a nis, thugaibh fa'n ear gu'm faodadh e bhi ni bu mhiosa. An d'àiichidh Dia oirbh comhfhurtachdan na beatha so? Dh'fhaodadh e mar an ceudna Criosd, sìth, agus maitheanas, àicheadh ort, agus an sin bhiodh do shuidheachadh brònach da-rìreadh. Tha fios agaibh gu'n d'rinn Dia so a thaobh muilleanan anns an t-saoghal: cia lion de na cuspairean truagh sin a dh'fhaodas bhur sùilean fhaicinn gach là, aig nach eil comhfhurtachd dlùth dhoibh, na eadhon dòchas air bith, a tha truagh ann an so, agus a bhios mar sin tre'n t-siorruidheachd: aig am bheil cupa searbh, agus gun ni aca gus a dheanamh milis; cha'n eil urad agus dòchas gu'm bi e ni's fearr. Ach cha'n eil e mar sin dhuibhse, ged a tha sibh bochd anns an t-saoghal so, gidheadh tha sibh "saobhir ann an creidimh, agus nan oighreachan air an rioghachd, a gheall e dhoibh-san a ghràdhaicheas e" (Seumas ii: 5). O foghlumaibh a bhi cur saibhreas spioradail thall fodh chomhair bochdainn aimseireil. Cothromaichibh bhur 'n uile thriobladaibh a tha làthair le bhur sochairean spioradail. Gu dearbh na'n robh Dia air àicheadh air bhur 'n anamaibh trusgan na fireantachd gus an còmhach, a' manna folaichte gus am beathachadh, na h'aitibh còmhnuidh neamhaidh gus an gabhail; 'n an robh bhur 'n anamaibh air am fàgail falamh cho maith ri bhur cuirp, dh'fhaodadh sibh da-rìreadh a bhi fodh mhulad; ach tha bhi toirt fa'n ear na nithean sin gu leoir gu bhi toirt air anam mothachail fois a ghabhail fodh chruaidh-chàs air bith bho'n leth a muigh. Bha e air a ràdh le *Luther* 'n uair a bha uireasbhuidh ga ghreimeachadh, "Biodh-mid toilichte le ar suidheachadh cruaidh, oir nach eil cuirm againn maille ri ainglean air Criosd, Aran na Beath?" Agus, a deir Pòl, "Beannaichte gu robh Dia, eadhon Athair ar Tighearn' Iosa Criosd, a bheannaich sinne leis gach uile bheannachadh spioradail ann an ionadan neamhaidh ann an Criosd" (Eph. i: 3).

(4) Cha'n eil an àmhghair so, ged a tha i mòr, 'n a leithid de àmhghair, 's nach eil aig Dia àmhghairean fada ni's motha, leis am bheil E smachdachadh aon ghràdhach anama anns an t-saoghal

so: agus na'n toireadh E air falbh i so agus gu'n cuireadh E iad so 'n a h-àite, Mheasadh sibh 'ur staid a tha làthair na staid glé chomhfhurtail, agus bheannaicheadh sibh Dia air son sibh a bhi nis mar a tha sibh.

Ciod a tha sibh a smuainteachadh, a shluagh? Na'n toireadh Dia air falbh bhur comhfhurtachdan a tha làthair, gu'n deanadh E suas bhur 'n uireasbhuidhean bho'n leth a muigh, gu'n toireadh E dhuibh miann bhur cridheachan ann an comhfhurtachdan bho'n chreutair, ach gu'm follaicheadh E ghnùis uaibh, gu'n tilgeadh E shaighdean a stigh do'r 'n anamaibh, agus gu'n toireadh E air nimh n'an saighdean sin a bhi'g òl suas bhur spioradan; na'm fàgadh E sibh air son beagan làithean aig buillean Shatain, agus na nithean toibheumach a bha e cur a stigh: na'n cumadh E bhur sùilean na'n duisg ach air son beagan oidhchibh le uamhasan coguis ga'r luasgadh a null agus a nall gu briseadh an latha: na'n treoiricheadh E sibh tre sheomraichibh a bhàis, gu'n nochdadh E dhuibh taisbeanaidhean an dorchadais, agus gu'n toireadh E air uamhasan seasamh an òrdugh 'n ar 'n aghaidh:— an sin Innsibh dhomh nach cùntadh sibh e 'n a thròcair thaghta a bhi air ais a ris do'n t-suidheachadh fhalamh a bh'agaibh an toiseach, le sìth coguis; agus chùntadh sibh aran 'us uisge, le deagh-ghean Dhé, na staid shona? O, uime sin, bitheamh air 'ur faiceal bho bhi gearain. Na abraibh gu'm bheil Dia a buinntean gu cruaidh ribh air eagal agus gu'm broснаich sibh E gu bhi dearbhadh dhuibh ann bhur mothachadh agus 'n ar faireachadh fein, gu'm bheil slatan ni's miosa Aige na iad so, air son clann eas-umhail agus cheannairceach.

(5) Ma tha e dona a nis, bithidh e ni's fearr an ùine ghoirid.

O gleidh do chridhe leis an smuaint so: tha mhin anns an t-soitheach air bheul a bhi ullamh, seadh, ma tha sin mar sin, c'ar son a chuireadh e buaireas orm, ma tha mì dlùth air a bhi taobh thall feum na'n nithean sin uile? Chaith am fear-turais gu beag a chuid airgid uile, ach tha tasdan na dha air am fagail; is maith, a deir e, ged a tha m'airgid gu beag air a chosg, gidheadh tha mo thuras air a bhi crìochnaicht' mar an ceudna; tha mì dlùth do mo dhachaidh, agus ann an sin, bithidh air a thoirt dhomh gu pailte. Mar eil coinnlean anns an tigh, gidheadh 's e comhfhurtachd a th'ann nach mòr nach eil an latha ann, agus an sin cha bhi feum air bith air coinnlean. Tha eagal orm, a Chrìosduidh, gu'n bheil thù mach as do chùntas dha do thaobh fein, 'n uair a thà thù smuainteachadh gu'm bheil t-ullachadh dlùth air a bhi air a chosg, agus gu'm bheil slighe fhad agad r'a shiubhal; mòran bhliodhnachan gu bhi beo, agus gun nì air bith gu bhi beo air. Faodaidh nach eil ann a leth urad 's a thà thù smuainteachadh; ann an so bi muinghineach, ma tha t-ullachadh

air a chosg, aon chuid bithidh ullachadh ùr a tighinn, ged nach eil thu faicinn cia as, ar neo tha thu ni's dluithe air ceann do thurais na tha thu fein a meas. Anam mhi-mhisneachail, an tig e do dhuine na do bhean a siubhal air an t-slighe a chum a bhaile neamhaidh, agus gu beag air tighinn dha ionnsuidh, an taobh a stigh de thuras bheagan laithean bho thigh Athar, far am bi uireasbhuidean uile air an deanamh suas, cuisean a ghabhail chò mòr gu cridhe a thaobh beagan biadh, deoch, na aodach, mu bheil eagal air a bhitheas e dh'easbhuidh air an t-slighe? B'e briathran uasal a bh'aig an dà fhichead mairtearach, a tha iomraideach ann an eachdraidh na h-eaglais, 'n uair a bha iad air an tionndadh a mach lomnochd air oidhche reota chum bàs fhaotainn leis an fhuachd, "Tha'n geamhradh da-rireadh geur agus fuar, ach tha neamh blàth agus comhfhurtail; ann an so tha sinn air chrith leis an fhuachd, ach nì uchd Abraham suas e uile."

Cur an aghaidh. Ach faodaidh mi bàsachadh le uireasbhuidh.

Freagairt. Co riamh dha'n do thachair so? Cuin a bha'm firean air a threigsinn? Ma tha e mar sin, tha do thuras crìoch-naichte, agus tha thu air do lionadh gu pailte.

Cur an aghaidh. Ach cha'n eil mi cinnteach a' sin: na'm bithinn cinnteach a neamh, bu ghnothuch eile e.

Freagairt. Nach eil sibh cinnteach a sin? An sin tha gnothuichean eil agaibh a chum dragh a chur oirbh fein na iad so: shaoilinn-sa gu'm bu chòr gu'm b'iad sin na cùraman a bu lugha a bu chòr a bhì agaibh. Cha'n eil mi faotainn gu'm bheil anamaibh a tha ann an imcheisd agus fodh bhuaireas a thaobh a bhì dh'easbhuidh maitheanas peacaidh, agus nithean mar sin, anns a chumantas glé chùramach a thaobh na'n nithean sin. Esan a bhios gu suidhichte a cur a leithid sin de cheisdean, "Ciod a nì mi a chum a bhì air mo thearnadh? Cia mar a bhios fios agam gu'm bheil mo pheacaidhean air a maitheadh? cha'n eil e gu tric ga bhuaireadh fein le," "Ciod a dh'itheas mi, no ciod a dh'òlas mi, agus ciod a chuireas mi umam?"

(6) An tigeadh e do chloinn a leithid so de Athair a bhì an-earbsach as uile-fhoghainteachd, na bhì gearain air a riaghlaidhean anns an fhreasdal? Am bheil sibh a deanamh gu maith a bhì fodh cheisd a thaobh a chùram agus a ghràdh anns a h-uile tionndadh ùr? Tha mi'g ràdh nach robh sibh fodh nàire a thaobh so roimhe so? Nach d'rinn ullachadh bhur 'n Athar ann an deagh àm air bhur son ann an cruaidh-ohàsan 's an àm a chaidh seachad an rùthadh a thoirt gu bhur gruaidh, agus nach tug sin oirbh rùnachadh nach cuireadh sibh an amharus a ghràdh agus a chùram bi's motha? Agus gidheadh an ath-nuadhaich sibh bhur 'n amharusan neo-airidh dha thaobh a ris? A leinibh

gun mhothachadh! reusanaich mar so riut fein—ma theid mi dhìth a dh' easbhuidh nan nithean a tha maith agus feumail dhomh, feumaidh aon chuid gur ann do-bhrìgh nach aithne do m' Athair m'uireasbhuidhean, oir nach eil Aige na nì suas iad: ar neo gu'm bheil E coma cìod a dh-eireas dhomh. Cò dhiubh so a chuireas mi as a leth? cha'n e cheud aon; oir tha fios aig bhrìgh 'n Athair cìod a tha dhìth oirbh (Mata vi: 32). Cha'n eil bhrìgh suidheachadh am folach bh'uaith: nì motha is e'n dara h-aon, oir "is leis an Tighearna an talamh, agus a làn: an domhan, agus iadsan a tha 'n an còmhnuidh ann" (Salm xxiv: 1). Is e's ainm Dhà "an Dia uile-ohumhachdach" (Gen xvii: 1), cha mhotha is e'n aon mu dheireadh, oir "mar a ghabhas athair truas d'a chloinn, gabhaidh an Tighearna truas dhiubhsan da'n eagail e" (Salm ciii: 13). Tha'n Tighearna "ro theo-chridheach agus tròcaireach" (Seumas v: 11). Eisdidh E ris na fithich òg 'n uair a ghlaodhas iad air son bìdh (Iob xxxviii: 41), agus nach eisd E riumsa? "Amhaircibh air canlaidh an adhair," a deir Crìosd, oir cha chuir iad siol, agus cha bhuain iad, agus cha chruinnich iad ann an saibhlean, gidheadh tha 'ur 'n Athair neamhaidh-sa ga'm beathachadh. Nach fearr sibhse gu mòr na iadsan (Mata vi: 26). Cha'n e eanlaidh aig an dorus, a tha gach là air am beathachadh le làmhnan dhaoine, ach canlaidh an adhair aig nach eil aon gu bhì deanamh ullachadh air an son. Am bheil Dia a beathachadh agus a còmhach a naimhdean, agus an dl-chuimhnich E a chlann? Chuala E glaodh Ismael ann an eiginn (Gen. xxi: 17). O mo chridhe eas-creidmheach, am bheil thu fathasd fodh theagamh? Cuimhnich Hagar agus an leanabh. (R'a leantuinn)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Bible Text Publicity

The above heading appeared in the *English Churchman* over a report of the annual meeting of the Bible Text Publicity Mission. This Mission places posters with texts from the Holy Scriptures on railway stations throughout the British Isles and has been doing this commendable work for 41 years. By thus placing portions of the Word of God without comment, before the eyes of passengers or passers-by, it is hoped that in times of declension religiously gospel truths may reach some outside the influence of organised Christianity and others also. One case of blessing, from among many, was that of a young man who testified that he had been strengthened and released from depression by a poster bearing the promise: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." During 1963, a total of 502 posters had been exhibited. The Honorary Secretary

is Rev. Wilfred J. Sayer, *English Churchman*, 69 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4. We give his name because this Mission is faced with increased costs and has need of financial support. The Word of God will not return unto Him void.

Public Transport on the Lord's Day

At the annual meeting of the Lord's Day Observance Society, held in London last April, Dr. Basil F. C. Atkinson, the Society's President, dealt, in his address, with the subject of public transport on the Lord's Day. A report of his remarks was not given in the *English Churchman*. Mr Legerton, Secretary, said that the Society had dealt with Sabbath Travelling in a specially prepared pamphlet. At the time of writing we have not seen this pamphlet. This subject has been dealt with once and again by the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church in years past, especially as to the use of public transport run for monetary purposes and worldly gain by Christians and the general public. We do not propose to enter upon comment in detail regarding this question but were interested to read that the matter had been raised. We would but state just now that Christians who profess love to the Law of God and to the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy," etc., must surely take into consideration the fact that thousands of men and women are employed and paid and their time taken up with working on the Sabbath Day. And professing Christians who use public transport even chiefly to attend public worship on the Sabbath contribute to depriving many of the Sabbath as the divinely appointed day of rest and employ their fellowmen to carry them to and from their place of worship and thus support those big business concerns which are only interested in making money on that day. Although we are fully aware of the present-day situation wherein many live long distances (and not so long) from the Church which they might wish to attend, albeit to use public transport and pay for it means the full employment of others on God's holy day. And for those who do so and yet publicly proclaim that they are concerned for the conservation of the Lord's Day, have need to think of where they really stand in this matter.

Strange Ceremonies on Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh

On the first day of May, at 5.30 a.m., as the day came in, Rev. Dr. R. Selby Wright, of Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh, held what is called the May Day service on the summit of the well-known hill Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh. While this ceremony was conducted, 15 University and College students, at the same time and near the same place, held a mock pagan ceremony affecting

to follow the pattern of Druidic rites. One student acted the part of a human sacrifice, garbed in a white sheet spattered with red ink. We think this action was indeed bold, crude and dangerous. The students thereafter were condemned by Rev. Dr. Selby Wright, and the Principals of the University and Art College. But we were interested to read a letter in *The Scotsman* which stated *inter alia*: "Is there anything intrinsically different between the students' Druidic rites and the ceremony conducted by Dr. Selby Wright? Is the annual gathering on Arthur's Seat at dawn on Beltane morning, to worship at the rising of the sun and to wash in the dew, so very different from the Druid's worship of the sun; and the sacredness of the May dew from the holy water of the Druids?" We are inclined to support the pertinent observations of the writer of the said letter. (Note: Beltane, a heathen festival.)

The Church of England and the Lord's Table

The Lord's Table Measure passed to the House of Commons by the Church of England for confirmation has been passed into law for the Church of England. The Measure proposed to change the law by providing that in future in the Church of England the Communion Table may be either movable or immovable, and may be made of wood, stone or other material. Alert Protestants know full well that this Measure has been urged by Anglo-Catholics so that stone immovable altars may be set up without let or hindrance in any church building throughout the Church of England. As one English writer has so well said: "The Table becomes the Altar, the Lord's Supper the Mass, and so on." What a blind drift away from the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ these foolish and indeed childish activities reveal!

The Restless World

Unrest arises and prevails in all parts of the world. This has been going on for years. At present, the mighty men of Russia and China are most unfriendly one toward the other. Cyprus, containing Greeks and Turks, is filled with hatred and violence. Egypt, and Nasser leading this nation, are sworn enemies of the Jews and the Nation of Israel. India and Pakistan live in enmity to one another. Within the Island of Malta, the people are deeply divided between those who are out and out supporters of the power of the Roman Catholic Church in the Island, and those who support Mintoff, the Labour leader, who wishes the influence of the said Church limited and restrained as to political and social issues. And in the Far East, nations there are disturbed and affected by conflict and bloodshed. And so the unhappy state of the world could be enlarged upon if we turned our attention

to Cuba and the American attitude to Castro, and so on. Men and nations involved in activities regarding what they conceive to be their worldly rights, yet without the influence of the gospel of Christ and Him crucified, are wandering in a wilderness wherein there is no way to solid peace and friendliness. The World Council of Churches, a dangerous organisation religiously, would do well to turn its whole attention to the consideration of that doctrine and gospel which saves men and nations from the power and pollution of sin and ungodliness; and which by the power of the Holy Spirit can make men believers on Christ and holy Christians who love the Lord and one another.

Crusade Against Poverty

There is poverty in prosperous America. In the month of May, President Johnson declared that his government were preparing to fight against poverty and said: "Our first objective is to free 30,000,000 Americans from the prison of poverty. The conscience of the entire nation had to be aroused. We will not succeed until every citizen regards the sufferings of neighbours as a call to action." These are commendable words from the man with the greatest political responsibility in the world today. May he and his government look to the God of providence to enable them to accomplish this high objective.

CHURCH NOTES

Communions

January—Fourth Sabbath, Inverness. *February*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; third, Stornoway; fourth, North Uist, Kyle of Lochalsh. *March*—First Sabbath, Ullapool; second, Ness, Portree and Tarbert; third, Finsbay; fourth, Kinlochbervie; fifth, London and North Tolsta. *April*—First Sabbath, Achmore, Portnalong, Fort-William and Stoer; third, Greenock; fourth, Glasgow, Wick. *May*—First Sabbath, Kames and Oban; second, Scourie; third, Edinburgh and Broadford. *June*—First Sabbath, Applecross; second, Shieldaig; third, Lochcarron, Glendale, Helmsdale, Dornoch and Uig; fourth, Gairloch and Inverness. *July*—First Sabbath, Lairg, Raasay and Beaulay; second, Staffin, Tomatin and Tain; third, Halkirk, Rogart, Flashadder and Daviot; fourth, Achmore, Bracadale, North Uist and Plockton. *August*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; second, Portree and Stratherrick; third, Bonar, Finsbay and Laide; fourth, Thurso, Vatten; fifth, Stornoway. *September*—First Sabbath, Ullapool, Breasclete; second, Strathy; third, Tarbert, Stoer and Vancouver (Canada); fourth, Applecross. *October*—First Sabbath, Tolsta, Lochcarron, Fort-William; second, Gairloch and Ness; third, Halkirk; fourth, Greenock, Lochinver and Wick. *November*—First Sabbath, Oban and Raasay; second, Glasgow; third, Edinburgh, Dornoch, Staffin and Uig. *December*—First Sabbath, London.

Day of Prayer

The Synod decided, "That a day of Prayer be held by the Congregations of the Church on Wednesday, the 29th July or Thursday, 30th July (D.V.) for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit

in view of increasing immorality and the widespread forsaking of the Word of God." Will Ministers and Missionaries take note of the dates for the Day of Prayer.—Robert R. Sinclair, Clerk of Synod.

Ballifeary Home of Rest

When Ballifeary House, Inverness was finally acquired by the Free Presbyterian Church in September of last year the work of converting the house into a commodious and comfortable Home for our aged people was at once energetically taken in hand and is at present proceeding without avoidable delay. The house was in excellent condition when taken over by us. In some respects, however, alterations proved to be more extensive than was at first anticipated, but these difficulties have gradually been overcome (and the home is now nearing completion). It is confidently hoped that by the time this notice appears the home will be open and occupied and serve the purpose for which it was purchased, justifying the expense and labour expended upon this worthy cause.

The Committee have recently appointed as Matron Miss Sheila MacGeddie for an initial period of 6 months, with the prospects thereafter of making the appointment permanent. A native of Tarbert, Harris and a member of the church Miss MacGeddie appears to possess the necessary qualifications for the position of Matron, having been trained in Institutional Management as well as having some nursing experience. We believe that our praying people have been bearing this matter and the whole enterprise upon their spirits at a throne of grace. Some domestic staff is being engaged, but so far no application has been received for the position of assistant matron, and the Committee would be glad, therefore, to hear from anyone who might be led to give herself to this work.

It may be of some help to our people who may be contemplating the step of seeking admission to the Home, if something is said about the conditions of application which may need some explanation. When the idea of opening such a centre as a Home of Rest was first seriously considered by the Church, the manner in which many of our church people had to spend their old age played a large part in bringing this whole matter into urgent notice, making it most desirable that something should be done to meet their needs in the way of providing a comfortable home where they could find congenial company and the religious atmosphere to which they were accustomed. The question of the health of those to be admitted had to be carefully examined, leading to some general rules being adopted. It is only to be expected that sickness and

failing health should sometimes occur, but provided that this is only of a temporary nature and the small staff in the Home can adequately deal with such sickness, there is no probability of those so afflicted being removed from the Home to hospital. Only when the doctor gives instructions to this effect in cases where skilled medical and nursing care are required, will anyone be removed for hospital treatment — this may happen to people even when living in their own homes. When this becomes necessary, the patient, on recovery, will return to the Home again. Where normal health is enjoyed, no fear need be entertained, therefore, that incidental sickness will require the removal of any of our people from the Home.

The question also of meeting the expenses of maintaining the Home had to be decided. For the purpose of appointing the charges to be met by those wishing to enter the Home, it was thought necessary to arrange these charges according to their respective incomes. There are those who in the Lord's providence are in a position to pay the full charge themselves, without assistance, at present fixed at £5 5/- per week, and these will D.V. be admitted without further question, provided that they are found suitable in other respects. Others may have no other income except their old age or other pensions; a small sum will be allowed them for personal use, and what remains of their pension will be accepted as the whole charge they may be asked to pay. In these cases, grants are made available by the local authorities to make up the full weekly charge, and because of this, and in order to satisfy the enquiries of these authorities, information about their financial affairs will be required, but the assurance can be given that any information asked for will be treated as being most confidential. Those who are in this position will be freely admitted to the Home. The fear that our people who in the Lord's providence are called to exist on their old age pension can not apply for admission is therefore groundless. However limited their income may be, no one need be deterred for this reason from entering the Home, which our Church has specially provided to accommodate our loyal people.

We look forward in the goodness of the Lord to seeing the Ballifeary Home soon operating with an adequate staff to attend to the proper and efficient functioning of the Home, and a full complement of residents enjoying the accommodation of a well conducted and harmonious centre of rest.

The Matron will welcome any visitors who are interested in seeing the Home and will gladly conduct them through the building.

Applicants for residence can now be admitted. Information can now be had from Rev. A. F. MacKay or members of Committee and arrangements made by Matron MacGeddie. The official opening of the Home will (D.V.) be at a later date.

Wm. Grant,

Convener of the Home of Rest Committee.

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